

Message Text

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ACTION EB-08

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 EUR-12 ISO-00 CAB-02 CIAE-00
COME-00 DODE-00 DOTE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 FAA-00
L-03 LAB-04 SIL-01 TRSE-00 /051 W
-----041243 131558Z /47

R 131417Z JUN 78

FM AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2555
INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMCONSUL MONTREAL
AMCONSUL TORONTO

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 01 OF 02 PORT OF SPAIN 01796

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EAIR, ELAB, TD
SUBJECT: BWIA PILOTS TO RESUME FLYING

REF: PORT OF SPAIN 1459 AND PREVIOUS

1. SINCE REFTTEL THERE HAVE BEEN A NUMBER OF NEW DEVELOP-
MENTS IN THE CONTINUING BWIA CRISIS, AMONG THE MOST IMPOR-
TANT OF WHICH ARE THE FOLLOWING:

- A. BWIA RESUMED LIMITED SERVICE TO MIAMI IN MID-MAY
AND TO CARACAS IN EARLY JUNE;
- B. WHILE THE VAST MAJORITY OF PILOTS HAVE REMAINED
ON STRIKE, BWIA HAS BEEN ABLE TO LURE BACK ENOUGH PILOTS
TO COVER THE MIAMI AND CARACAS FLIGHTS;

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- C. GOTT ANNOUNCED A NUMBER OF DECISIONS JUNE 3,
INCLUDING PLANS TO LEASE TWO DC-10S, FOR WHICH BWIA WILL
ENTER DISCUSSIONS WITH SEA BOARD WORLD AIRWAYS. BWIA ALSO
PLANS TO PURCHASE TWO DC-950S (ONE ALREADY IS ON ORDER)
AND TWO DC-10S. FINANCING FOR THESE DEALS WAS DISCUSSED
BETWEEN PM WILLIAMS AND BANK OF AMERICA REPS MAY 30;

- D. GOTT AND BARBADOS HAVE INITIATED DISCUSSIONS ON A JOINT VENTURE AIR CARGO COMPANY;
- E. THE NEW AIRLINE TO BE FORMED BY THE AMALGAMATION OF BWIA AND TTAS REPORTEDLY WILL CALL ITSELF BWIA;
- F. FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE THE PILOTS' STRIKE BEGAN FEBRUARY 1, GOTT AND PILOTS' ASSOCIATION (TALPA) HAVE ENTERED INTO DISCUSSIONS RE THE STATUS AND FUTURE OF THE FIRED PILOTS.

2. ON POINT F. ABOVE, WE HAVE LEARNED FROM PILOT SOURCES THAT QUIET TALKS HAVE BEEN GOING ON FOR SEVERAL WEEKS BETWEEN CHARLES GRAHAM-PERKINS, ACTING IN BEHALF OF THE GOTT, AND FOUR TALPA REPS. (JUSTICE GRAHAM-PERKINS, WHO CHAIRED THE COMMITTEE WHICH REPORTED TO CABINET WITH RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE FUTURE ORGANIZATION OF T&T'S AIR SERVICES, HAS BEEN PLAYING A MAJOR ROLE FOR GOVERNMENT IN THE BWIA SITUATION EVER SINCE.) THE OUTCOME OF THESE TALKS WAS WHAT OUR SOURCES HAVE DESCRIBED AS AN ULTIMATUM FROM GRAHAM-PERKINS TO THE PILOTS CONTAINING A LIST OF CONDITIONS ON WHICH RESUMPTION OF THE PILOTS' EMPLOYMENT WOULD BE CONTINGENT. MANY OF THE CONDITIONS, WHICH COVERED A BROAD RANGE OF ISSUES SUCH AS PAY, LEAVE, WORKING CONDITIONS, ETC., MERELY CONFIRMED THE STATUS QUO ANTE, SOME WERE MORE RESTRICTIVE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AS REGARDS THE PILOTS' RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES, WHILE SOME WERE SURPRISINGLY GENEROUS (I.E., THE OFFER OF SOFT LOANS TO THE PILOTS FOR THE MONEY THEY HAD LOST IN SALARIES WHILE OUT ON STRIKE). DESPITE PRESSURE FROM THE PILOTS, GRAHAM-PERKINS (WHO STRESSED THROUGHOUT THAT HE WAS SPEAKING FOR THE "HIGHEST AUTHORITY") REFUSED TO PUT ANYTHING IN WRITING OR TO PLEDGE THAT THERE WOULD BE NO VICTIMIZATION. HE ALSO MADE CLEAR THAT THE PILOTS WERE BEING ASKED TO RETURN TO WORK TEMPORARILY UNTIL THE NEW AIRLINE IS FORMED, AT WHICH TIME THEY WOULD BE OFFERED PERMANENT EMPLOYMENT.

3. IN A STORMY EIGHT-HOUR MEETING ON JUNE 10, THE TALPA MEMBERSHIP VOTED BY SECRET BALLOT 46 TO 45 WITH ONE ABSTENTION TO REJECT THE GRAHAM-PERKINS ULTIMATUM. HOWEVER, IN VIEW OF THE CLOSENESS OF THE VOTE AND WHAT THE PILOTS REGARDED AS THE REAL DANGER THAT TALPA WOULD NOT SURVIVE AS AN ORGANIZATION, THE ASSOCIATION'S LEADERSHIP DECIDED THAT ANYONE WHO WANTED TO RETURN TO WORK ON THE GOTT'S TERMS SHOULD BE FREE TO DO SO AND SO INFORMED GRAHAM-PERKINS. OUR SOURCES BELIEVE THAT AS A RESULT MOST OF THE PILOTS WILL RETURN TO WORK SOON.

5. COMMENT. IN EFFECT, THE PILOTS ARE BUYING A PIG IN A POKE, AND THEY KNOW IT. WITH THE JUNE 10 TALPA VOTE, IT APPEARS THAT ORGANIZED PILOT RESISTANCE TO BWIA HAS BEEN BROKEN AND THAT THE GOTT HAS, FOR THE MOMENT AT LEAST, ACHIEVED ITS ENDS IN THIS REGARD. NEVERTHELESS, MANY PILOTS, INCLUDING SOME WHO VOTED YES, ARE UNEASY ABOUT GRAHAM-PERKINS'S UNWILLINGNESS TO PUT ANYTHING IN WRITING, REFUSAL TO FORSWEAR VICTIMIZATION, AND FUZZINESS ABOUT MANY OF THE DETAILS OF HIS OWN PROPOSALS (WHEN ASKED, FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN THE RETURNING PILOTS WOULD START BEING PAID

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AGAIN, HE REPORTEDLY REPLIED THAT SALARIES WOULD START AS SOON AS AN "EMPLOYER-EMPLOYEE RELATIONSHIP" HAD BEEN RE-ESTABLISHED BUT WOULD NOT BE ANY MORE PRECISE THAN THAT). THE PILOTS CLEARLY ARE FEELING THE PINCH FINANCIALLY AND MOST, IN OUR OPINION, WOULD BE WILLING TO RETURN TO WORK UNDER ANY REASONABLE CONDITIONS. HOWEVER, THE AGREEMENT MADE WITH GRAHAM-PERKINS COULD EASILY COME UNSTUCK IF THE GOTT OR BWIA TRIED TO PULL ANY FAST ONES ON THE PILOTS OR TOO BLATANTLY TO RUB THE PILOTS' NOSES IN THEIR CAPITULATION. GRAHAM-PERKINS IS QUOTED IN THE "SUN" OF JUNE 12 TO THE EFFECT THAT HE HOPES THE AIRLINE WILL BECOME FULLY FUNCTIONAL IN TWO TO THREE WEEKS. FOX

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